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Dec. 2, 2003
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NEWS RELEASE

THE POWER OF THE TINY MUSTARD SEED: UD GRADUATE AND TRUSTEE PENS INSPIRATIONAL BOOK

DAYTON, Ohio — When Westina Matthews Shatteen entered a doctoral program at the University of Chicago in 1977, she arrived with little money, two suitcases, the pain of a faltering marriage — and one mustard seed.

"Our family did not have a lot of money, but my mother wanted to give me something, some expression of love, hope and faith," recalled Matthews, who earned bachelor's and master's degrees in education from the University of Dayton after growing up in Yellow Springs, Ohio. "She said, 'Remember, so long as you have the faith of a single mustard seed, all things are possible, if you only believe.'"

Now a highly successful executive at a prominent Wall Street firm in New York who was featured in *Ebony's* "Women at the Top in Corporate America" in 2001, she still wears her mother's gift: a simple gold-plated chain on which hangs a small glass bulb containing a mustard seed. Since 2000, she has traveled around the country sharing her inspirational message of hope at churches, conferences and college campuses. In the spirit of her late mother, she always hands listeners a tiny packet of mustard seeds on which is printed a verse from Matthew in the Bible: "If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you."

Audiences of all Christian denominations have been so receptive to her talk, which is sprinkled with anecdotes from her life, that she's been inundated with requests for mustard seeds. This month she's publishing a 32-page book, "Have a Little Faith: The Faith of a Mustard Seed," under the name of Westina Matthews, Ph.D. She bought five pounds of mustard seeds from a Middle Eastern grocery store in Brooklyn Heights, N.Y., and is filling 3,000 packets to enclose with the books. Starting Dec. 7, it can be ordered online for \$9.99 through www.havealittlefaith.com.

"It's a little message of hope that people need right now," said Matthews, who serves on the board of trustees at the University of Dayton and Bank Street College of Education. "With

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all the uncertainty in our lives — with the state of the economy and the terrorist attacks — people are looking for something to hold onto that will give them meaning, faith, courage and hope.”

Why do people connect with Matthews? “People understand that my voice is genuine, that in those moments of desperation and doubt, I have found faith to carry me through.”

As the keynote speaker at the University of Dayton’s annual Martin Luther King Jr. breakfast two years ago, Matthews told how she “ran for her life” across the Brooklyn Bridge when the World Trade Center collapsed across the street from her office. She also shared a conversation she had with her dying mother. “I quietly confessed to her that when I died and got to heaven, the first question I intended to ask God was why I didn’t have any children. How could he have made a woman so loving and caring, whose arms ached to hold a child of her own, and yet decide that she was not to have one?” she related. Her mother’s response surprised her: “And what would be the second question?” She then asked if she had forgotten the “faith of a mustard seed.”

Matthews is already penning a second book, “Have a Little Faith: For Women,” which will be available in March during Women’s History Month. Matthews, who’s a member of the New York Women’s Forum, will deliver the keynote address at the Annie T. Thornton Women’s Leadership Conference at the University of Dayton on April 17.

“This is my Noah experience. By faith, Noah build the ark,” she said with a laugh. A law firm offered pro bono legal advice. Dallas graphic designer Shannon Reeves heard about the project from a friend and designed the book for free. The creator of her Web site, who’s carried around a packet of mustard seeds in his wallet for two years, volunteered to design the site, which encourages other people to share their stories of faith.

The daughter of the late Rev. Wesley Smith Matthews, Matthews never turned away from her religious upbringing. “I have always had a strong faith,” said Matthews, an Episcopalian. “Under my picture in the yearbook at Yellow Springs high school, a friend wrote the scripture verse, ‘Go ye therefore and teach all nations.’ Early on, people identified within me a strong faith and a sense of service and community and giving back.

“That’s what attracted me to the University of Dayton, and it’s kept me here as a trustee.”

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